PML-N wins NA-66 by-poll after rivals retire

By Waseem Ashraf Butt

GUJRAT: Bilal Farooq Tarrar, the ruling PML-N candidate for the Wazirabad NA-66 by-polls, has been declared elected unopposed as other candidates retired from the race.

He is the younger brother of Federal Minister for Information Attaullah Tarrar.

Returning Officer Shabeer Hussain Butt issued a notification on Saturday, declaring the PML-N nominee as elected unopposed.

The seat had fallen vacant in August last in the wake of conviction of the then Punjab PTI president and MNA Muhammad Ahmed Chattha in a case of May 9 riots.

Scheduled for Sept 18, the by-polls were postponed due to massive flooding in Wazirabad and surrounding areas due to rain. The Election Commission of Pakistan rescheduled the ballot to Nov 23.

Sources in RO office said 30 aspirants had filed their papers, including ex-MPA Bilal Farooq Tarrar of the PML N, ex-MPA Ijaz Samman of the PPP, four family members of veteran politician Hamid Nasir Chattha and others.

However, all four members of the Chattha family, including Ahmed Chattha, his wife Ain Chattha, brother Fayyaz Chattha, also a former Gujranwala district nazim, and his daughter, had withdrawn their nomination papers after PTI founder Imran Khan announced boycott of the by-polls in Punjab.

PPP's Ijaz Samman too withdrew his papers as per the seat adjustment formula of his party with the PML- N whereas some other independent candidates also quit the race.

Two candidates backed by Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) and some others submitted their retirement, paving the way for Bilal Tarrar's return unopposed.

The notification has been sent to the ECP for the issuance of a formal notification of the returned candidate.

Belonging to Pir Kot village near Gakhar Mandi town of Gujranwala, Bilal Tarrar had earlier been elected as an MPA twice from a Punjab Assembly seat of Rahwali and Gakhar towns but he lost the February 2024 polls on that PA seat.

Bilal Tarrar is the grandson of former president Rafique Tarrar and this is for the first time that the Tarrar family contested an NA seat of Wazirabad as earlier in February 2024 polls Attaullah Tarrar applied for the PML-N ticket from a Gujranwala NA seat which was resisted by senior parliamentarian and former federal minister Mahmood Basheer Virk as the latter succeeded in keeping the senior Tarrar away.

LAHORE: An aerial view of tents erected for Raiwind congregation. — White Star

Major revamp projects underway to combat smog, traffic congestion

Officials say busiest areas have been divided into various zones for the project starting from revamping Data Darbar, Bhati Chowk, Mohni Road and surroundings

By Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: In a bid to reduce pollution and ensure a hassle-free traffic flow in the provincial metropolis, the government has launched various development works at identified busy hotspots with the aim to facilitate the public at large.

"The city of Lahore has been facing serious environmental issues, especially smog in the winter since long. Even the Lahore High Court took up these issues very seriously, directing the government to take action by introducing various interventions in this regard," an official source in the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) told *Dawn* on Saturday.

For this, according to him, the city's busiest areas had been divided into various zones, starting from revamping areas around the Data Darbar, Bhati Chowk, Mohni Road and surroundings. The project, worth Rs2.5 billion, include remodeling Bhati Chowk, development of a sitting area in front of Data Darbar, development of pedestrian zones, a pedestrian bridge connecting the sitting area with the parking, a parking facility, widening of road from Lower Mall to Bhati Chowk and Mohni Road, uplifting of façade of adjoining areas of Data Darbar, landscaping, restoration of street lights, road furniture and signage etc.

According to a document, around 5.5 kanal private land is being acquired, whereas the 16 kanal state land under use of the recently-demolished bird market has also been taken into possession. The project aims to provide smooth traffic flow to around 270,000 vehicles per day. The major benefits, according to officials, include uninterrupted traffic flow, safe pedestrian mobility, aesthetic improvement of the area and reduction in smog and carbon emission. The project includes the localities of Data Darbar and surrounding roads, Bhati Chowk, Lower Mall, Circular Road (Bhati to Azadi interchange) and Mohni Road. The LDA will fund this project from its own sources, whereas its subsidiary — Tepa will execute this scheme within eight months.

"The other areas set to be remodeled on the pattern of the aforementioned scheme include the area in front of the railway station, Misri Shah, Aik Moria Pul, Do Moria Pul and Circular Road," revealed another official while talking to this scribe. He said the completion of these development schemes would help control the pollution and improve the environment in the city significantly.

To a question, he said the debris of the demolished bird market near the Darbar had been removed completely. "This work was completed on Saturday," he added.

DATABASE DIGITISATION: The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) has initiated computerisation of the database of all billboards and hoardings displayed across the city for advertising purposes.

This initiative is being carried out to replace the traditional billing and revenue recovery system with a fully automated, transparent process. According to PHA Additional Director General Zeeshan Nasrullah Ranjha, the digitalisation was part of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's vision to ensure transparency in billing and revenue recovery and eliminating corruption.

He added that PHA was committed to enhancing the beauty and greenery of the provincial capital. Increasing PHA's revenue and ensuring its financial self-sufficiency were the top priorities of the government of Punjab, he added.

PTI's central Punjab leadership restored

By Mansoor Malik

LAHORE: The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf has reversed a decision that had highlighted internal rifts, with secretary-general Salman Akram Raja announcing reinstatement of the party's central Punjab leadership via his X handle.

"The PTI Punjab review committee meeting has unanimously decided to restore Ahmad Chattha as Central Punjab president," stated Mr Raja in his post on X and added that he explained the committee members about the events since Mr Chattha's removal.

It is learnt that the review committee had unanimously urged the secretary-general to implement the change of central Punjab leaders as per instructions of incarcerated party founder Imran Khan.

Mr Raja, in his tweet, also took exception to "a leaked screenshot" and has reportedly said the screenshot was from a mere discussion held in July, where he proposed changes in central Punjab, albeit on an acting basis.

The secretary-general, in his next meeting with the incarcerated leader, might inform him about rifts within the party and managing of party affairs in Punjab by chief organiser Aliya Hamza and her team. Mr Raja is expected to meet Mr Khan in Adiala jail on Tuesday.

Aliya said the party founder's focal person was now a final authority and Mr Raja's tweet is enough to restore previous central Punjab leaders Ahmad Chattha and Bilal Ejaz.

"My notification appointing Ali Imtiaz Warraich and Tariq Mahmood Sahi as president and general secretary, respectively, stands null and void," she said. It may be mentioned that Mr Chattha also lost his NA-66 seat to the PML-N candidate who returned unopposed, as he had withdrawn himself from the election on the instructions of Mr Khan.

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PPSC abolishes academic marks weightage in merit

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC) on Saturday introduced reforms in the recruitment process and abolished the weightage of academic marks in determining merit.

The decision was made in a commission's meeting on the recommendations of the Reform Committee, headed by PPSC member retired IG Arif Nawaz Khan. Under the PPSC Ordinance, the commission has the authority to make such decisions.

PPSC Secretary Afzal Ahmad stated that the decision was taken after a comparative analysis of various public service commissions of different countries.

PPSC Chairman retired Lt-Gen Abdul Aziz has taken a major step to further strengthen the recruitment process based on fairness, merit and transparency. The PPSC has abolished the weightage of academic marks in determining merit.

Mr Aziz stated that the purpose of these reforms is to enhance transparency and impartiality and provide equal opportunities to all candidates.

PPSC Deputy Director Syed Kazim Muqaddas said significant reforms were introduced in the recruitment process. "From now on, merit will be determined solely on the basis of PPSC examination results and interviews, while the weightage of written examination marks has been increased," he said.

He said the practice of awarding additional marks for research work and non-clinical experience has been discontinued and these new reforms will come into effect from Jan 1, 2026.

He said a uniform, transparent and merit-based system will be established for all candidates with the implementation of these reforms.

He said these measures will help eliminate disparities arising from different examination systems and grading methods.

According to the PPSC, further improvements aligned with international standards are also under consideration to enhance the recruitment process.

'Fake' social media activist arrested

BAHAWALPUR: Model Town police in Vehari district have arrested a 'fake' social media activist and booked him in two separate cases.

The suspect was allegedly blackmailing and threatening people and spreading objectionable material through his posts.

Police sources identified the suspect as Junaid Hashim, a resident of suburban 461/EB, who was allegedly extorting money while impersonating a social activist.

In the first case (FIR No. 1374/25), Hashim was charged under sections 506 and 292 of the PPC.

In the second case, he was charged under the Arms Act following the alleged recovery of a pistol from him. — **Correspondent**

Arbitral tribunals interim order can't be challenged in civil courts

LHC dismisses LDA's plea in a dispute over Orange Line train

By Wajih Ahmad Sheikh

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has ruled that interlocutory or procedural orders passed by arbitral tribunals cannot be independently challenged before civil courts under the Arbitration Act 1940.

Justice Raheel Kamran passed a judgement, dismissing a petition by the Lahore Development Authority (LDA), challenging an order of a civil court, which upheld an arbitral tribunal's decision in a dispute arising from the Orange Line Metro Train Project (Package-2).

M/s Zahir Khan & Brothers had entered into an agreement with the LDA in 2016.

Following disagreements, the matter was referred to an arbitral tribunal, which began proceedings in December 2024.

During arbitration, the LDA sought separation and individual adjudication of multiple sub-claims filed by the respondent.

The tribunal rejected this request on May 17, 2025, prompting the petitioner to challenge the decision before a civil court. The civil judge dismissed the challenge on July 31, 2025, leading to the petition before the high court.

The LDA/petitioner's counsel argued that the tribunal's order was invalid because it was issued after the expiry of its mandate on April 24, 2025 and before any formal extension of time was granted.

He said the tribunal's jurisdiction had lapsed and all proceedings conducted afterward were void.

Opposing the plea, the respondent's (the company) counsel contended that the Arbitration Act 1940 does not allow challenges to interlocutory or procedural orders of arbitral tribunals.

He said both parties had implicitly consented to extend the tribunal's time and that the petitioner had acted in bad faith by participating in proceedings without objection only to challenge the order after receiving an unfavourable decision.

He stated that even if the tribunal's time had expired, the subsequent court-approved extension on June 3, 2025, operated retrospectively and validated the tribunal's actions.

Justice Kamran observed that interlocutory orders of an arbitral tribunal did not finally determine the rights of the parties; therefore, could not be challenged before a civil court.

The judge held that allowing judicial review of every procedural order would defeat the very purpose of arbitration, open floodgates for delay and transform the arbitrator into a trial court.

Citing international authorities, including Russell on Arbitration and Gary Born's International Commercial Arbitration, as well as Pakistani precedents such as National Construction Co. versus Wapda (PLD 1987 SC 461), the judge reiterated that arbitration is designed as an autonomous dispute resolution mechanism with minimal court interference.

Justice Kamran dismissed the petition, upholding both the civil court and the arbitral tribunal's orders.

The judge reaffirmed that arbitration proceedings should continue without interruption or judicial oversight of interlocutory matters.